

Participatory democracy in Integrated Rural Development. The case of LEADER Programme

Towards Europe 2020 and Community-led Local Development

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ABSTRACT

The next European programming period 2014-2020 is aiming to reach the goals of Europe's strategy of sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. Together with these objectives and according to the spirit of European integration, the European Union wants therefore to point to a greater territorial cohesion, also because of a concrete overrun of the economic and social crisis broken out in 2008 at a global level. Furthermore, the European Union wants to stimulate a more intense and purposeful participation of citizens in decision-making process. In this way, the growing requirement of more participation and territorial cohesion, that could be understood as a place-based development, are translated into the dimension of community that, according to the European program 2014-2020, are realised by the Community-led Local Development whereby the reading key is LEADER method.

LEADER is a local development approach which allows local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential. One specific attempt to tackle the above mentioned challenges are the Local Action Groups (LAGs) that will compose the CLLD. Based on the lessons learnt of LAGs during the current period 2007-2013, we want to assess whether the new approach of Community-led Local Development (CLLD) will improve the challenges of place-based approaches and participative democracy in the coming period with a strong and positive impact to the local community.

The research is focusing on three case-studies, Tuscany for Italy, Flanders for Belgium and Tampere for Finland and the comparative tool is the measure 321 of the Rural Development Program 2007-2013. The analysis of the current period should give an essential contribution to improve the participation in the CLLD for the next years with a particular attention for the involvement of the local stakeholders, understanding how they have been involved, which tools (assembly, vote, board etc.), at which levels (local, regional) have been used and what will be the innovative perspectives for the future.

INTRODUCTION

With our proposal for the research project we would like to focus on the potential connection between participatory democracy and LEADER approach in the field of Integrated Rural Development. The main scope is verifying how LEADER could be understood as a tool to steer participation in the system of governance among and endogenous development and how this method might contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020's strategy and the aims of the European programming period 2014-2020.

The research is based on twofold methodological level: on one hand a theoretical framework that analyses the general context we are focusing on and then the reading-keys we are using for the research; on the other hand the empirical comparison of the case-studies in order to evaluate and demonstrate the starting hypothesis.

The starting point of the general context regards the issues of the European Union in the perspective of the next programming period 2014-2020 and of Europe 2020's strategy. Afterwards, the analysis is going head with the deepening at scientific level of specific concepts around which our research will revolve: first of all the globalisation and its implications in the local dimension in order to define the regarding field for the achievement of community-led local development, to carry on then with the integrated rural development as an endogenous development for rural areas meant as one of the most important issues of the European programming. The attention will focus on LEADER method as a relevant example of endogenous development trying to concentrate the analysis to its potential connection with the participatory democracy. The case studies will be Tuscany for Italy, Flanders for Belgium and Tampere for Finland in order to have a comparison between Southern and Northern Europe by different governance systems.

With the year 2014 Europe and its borders will face the next programming period not only as a instrument to reinforce the integration within the Member States by a political point of view through the achievement of projects and funding but even with a particular expectation: finding an exit strategy for the economic and social crisis that, we know, is not conjunctural but deeply structural.

The coming seven years of the next European programming with a great probability will be the turning point for the future of Europe itself, in its relationship with the whole world and with each Member State in a political, economic and social points of view.

If we turn the glance at the speech of José Barroso on the preparations of the European Council of June 2013 – the importance meeting finalized to reach a compromise about the Regulation on Common Agriculture Policy – we could easily understand whether the main preoccupation at European level is still the overcoming of the crisis towards the direction of the growth, the sustainability and the cohesion. And this need is completely touchable in the spirit of the Programming period 2014-2020 we might find in the the deeper meaning of cohesion policy to achieve through the Community-led Local Development.

On the other hand, this can find its roots even two years after the bursting of the speculative bubble when Europe decided to fight the crisis, once it was clear and established that it was not a momentary conjuncture. In this way the strategy for an European growth was set out in 2010 aiming at sustainable, smart and inclusive growth as goal to reach in 2020. Smart growth refers to develop an economy based on knowledge and innovation; the sustainable growth involves the promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy. Finally the inclusive growth, focuses on fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

“Europe faces a moment of transformation. The crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed structural weaknesses in Europe's economy. In the meantime, the world is moving fast and long-term challenges – globalisation, pressure on resources, ageing – intensify. The EU must now take charge of its future.” (*EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*).

Taking into account the internal spirit of the Europe 2020's strategy, we could detect a potential intention to act collectively as well as a catalyst among the mentioned three objectives. But it becomes hard to catch up the three priorities without having well in mind which kind of society you would like to shape: if the economic and financial capitalism has caused the current crisis with global reach, which kind of economic and social system do you would like to build up at least in the boundaries of Europe? Which kind of cohesion are you talking about? And, maybe first of all, at which levels we'd rather building up cohesion after the crisis and the overcoming of the modern Nation-State?

Globalisation, localisation and fragmentation

We have for sure a well-defined starting point: the globalisation, understood as the unification process of the world economy in its epistemological nuance of “globalisation of the world economy” with a clear reference to the capitalistic production model. Taking Habermas (1998) the globalisation shapes “the widening and the intensification of the relations of traffic, communication and exchange across national borders”. The game is deeply played by a process of growing interconnection within social, political, cultural and economic dynamics where the concept of the distance is completely swept away. The imminent challenge for the next year of Europe understood as institutional Union is just to face it with tools of political integration, social development and economic recovery after the bad local consequences of austerity actions. And Europe is a perfect model to investigate regarding the relation between globalization and its impact to local dimension. Indeed if globalization forms the primary background driving the ideas set out below, then the European

Union becomes the perfect theatre to rehearse those ideas: the ‘pulling-upwards’ by the forces of globalization is reflected in the increasing influence of the European Union over economic, social and cultural life in the form of common policies and regulation legislation, and interventions funded by the Structural and Cohesion Funds. Organizations in the public, voluntary and private sector are all, to a greater or lesser extent, being ‘Europeanized’ as they direct their attention towards the EU in policy lobbying and in opportunistic claims on funds allocated to EU programmes (Ray 1998a; see also Martin 1993 and Smith 1995).

If we turn the glance to the relation between globalisation and modernity we have to mention the statement of Anthony Giddens in *The consequences of modernity* (1994) about the idea of post-modern according to whom the globalisation is “the intensification of world social relations which connect faraway places making sure that the local events will be shaped by the events happening in thousands miles and viceversa”. There are two concepts that can steal our attention: social relations and places that let me to use the term “fragmentation” to indicate a process tenderly social whereby the dialectic between global and local levels leads to a fragmentation of the modern landmarks. It is the local – or better the places – that thus assumes a new connotation and perhaps more practical from the point of view of the individual. In this sense, society, globalised or europeanized, becomes restricted to the most local/territorial levels and therefore fragmented looking for a size that is felt common. Hereby, beside the dialectic global/local, we have to consider the dialectic local/extra-local. Thus, the use of the term territory (or ‘place’) signals the intention to formulate some of the options for action available to people in territories to which they feel a sense of belonging and in which the forces described above are manifesting themselves. It is through the medium of these dynamic tensions that the forces of modernity are materializing; just as it has been argued that ‘(rural) development’ takes place at, and is defined by, the interface between the agents of planned intervention and the actors in localities (Long and van der Ploeg 1989; Long and Villareal 1993), so territories themselves are being moulded and created by the local/extralocal tensions of globalization and reflexive modernity (Ray 1998, 1999). These concepts assume even more meaning and deepening if we look at the dialectic between globalisation and fragmentation. And I wonder: how does local dimension interact within globalisation and fragmentation?

Taking a sociological reflexion of Ian Clark “the globalisation would be a phenomenon in constant dispute with one of the localisation which is characterized both in (...) terms of tendency to disintegrate, autarchy and isolation both in terms of separatism ethnic-nationalistic and of regional integration”. This means whether the globalisation is not a simple economic phenomenon but something that reaches and touches also the social if not the institutional perspective. If we look at the term “localisation” we have to highlight whether this is a process which reverses the trend of globalization by discriminating in favour of the local (Hines, 2000). It ensures that all goods and services that can reasonably be provided locally should be. The policies bringing about localization are ones which increase control of the economy by communities and nation states. The result should be an increase in community cohesion, a reduction in poverty and inequality and an improvement in livelihoods, social infrastructure and environmental protection, and hence an increase in the all-important sense of security.

Focusing the attention on the dialectic global-local that is the essence of the post-modernity, we are going to analyse the local dimension in its dual articulation of development and society. That's true because the spatial and territorial dimension won't be understood as morphological and functional dimension, but even as aggregation historically given and fickle of natural resources and knowledge, social actors and institutional powers, productive activities an cycles, social relations and organisational models.

Erik Swyngedouw (2004) speaks about ‘Glocalisation’ referring to the twin process whereby, firstly, institutional/regulatory arrangements shift from the national scale both upwards to supra-national or global scales and downwards to the scale of the individual body or to local, urban or regional configurations and, secondly, economic activities and inter-firm networks are becoming simultaneously more localised/regionalised and transnational. Even before (1992) he refers to (1) the contested restructuring of the institutional level from the national scale both upwards to supra-national or global scales and downwards to the scale of the individual body or the local, urban or regional configurations and (2) the strategies of global localisation of key forms of industrial, service and financial capital with a particular attention to the system of governance connected to the progressive need of citizen participation.

Globalisation, fragmentation and localisation could be linked by the conceptual chain “dis-embedding”-“re-embedding” that overtakes the national borders and the idea of nation itself. In this globalised and fragmented context where people try to find repair in the local identity or better community we may wonder if and how the participation could be the reading key to pass from the status of embedded into a global dimension to that one of re-embedded into a local dimension.

Preferring remaining on the issues of social and political perspective, Europe offers us another stimulus because we can't face the problem of the cohesion and the local dimension without stressing how the

globalisation has changed the core of the modernity: the popular sovereignty and the representation in the Nation-State. Indeed, in its current form, the representation is inseparable from the territory and it is therefore clear that, displacing the real power outside the national boundaries, the globalization actually expropriates representative institutions and lays the foundations for a democratic impoverishment: already, we are seeing a clear erosion of the prerogatives of the governments and parliaments. At that point, according to some, the political debate is now plastered in front of the numbing prospect of a national policy forced to adapt to the imperatives of globalization.

The globalisation and the end of modernity in this sense have placed by time a problem of governance that Nation-States, as it seems, delay to solve with political consequences in the society. Who does really detain the power? And what is the optimal level to exercise the power in order to reduce the distance to the politics and to give the right answers to the population? What is the role of the citizenship into the policy-decision process?

The term of community and its role in the post-modern society, where the perspective is global, could lead to an answer to these questions with a particular attention to the European policy 2014-2020. It could be not by chance, indeed, the fact to find the term community-led like one of the tools to achieve towards Europe 2020 and like the main tool that aims at participation and territorial cohesion. This is could be even truer if we circumscribe the community-led to the field of rural development considering the importance recognised to such issue by the European programming and the relevance of the concepts we're focusing on.

Therefore what do we mean with the concept of Community-led local development (CLLD) as formulated for the next programming period 2014-2020?

Community-led local development in the Europe 2020

Pursuing the requirement of catching up the empowerment of participation and the improvement of place-based development meant as a catalyst of territorial cohesion, the European Union has formulated an innovative governance tool but with known roots: the Community-led Local Development.

As announced before, in October 2011, the European Commission adopted a draft legislation package for the future EU Cohesion Policy in the period 2014-2020, together with the CAP and the fisheries policies, which are not part of Cohesion Policy but strongly linked to it. The new legislative package is aimed at responding to absorption and effectiveness issues implied by the financial crisis since 2008 and to foster the important role of EU Cohesion Policy in delivering the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The character of the new package can be described by stronger co-ordination between Cohesion Policy – represented by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) – and the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritimes and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) through a Common Provisions Regulation (CPR). The common spirit of the regulations are a concentration on the Europe 2020 Strategy, more emphasis on incentive in rewarding performance, some more preference on integrated programming through multi-fund interventions, focusing on results through better monitoring tools and progress towards agreed objectives, strengthening citizen participation, reinforcing territorial cohesion and simplifying delivery through different kinds of simplified cost options and eligibility.

The Common Strategic Framework, and so the Partnership Agreement Contract between the European Commission and each Member State will translate the objectives and targets of the Union priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth into key actions for the ERDF, the CF, the ESF, the EAFRD and the EMFF which will ensure an integrated use of the CSF Funds to deliver common objectives.

One of the most interesting features of the package is the promotion of the community-led local development (CLLD) based on the experience of an initiative financed by EU Structural Funds, designed to help rural actors consider the long-term potential of their local region, has proven an effective and efficient tool in the delivery of development policies (Common Guidance of CLLD signed by a pool of experts of European Commission elaborated in order to facilitate their achievement at Member States' level).

CLLD is formulated in the CPR's regulation (The main principles for CLLD are laid down in Article 28-31 and there are complementary fund-specific rules for EAFRD (LEADER) and EMFF in the respective proposals for regulations) as a specific tool to use at sub-regional level, which is complementary to other development support at local level. As a truly bottom-up approach, one of its main advantages is that it is able to mobilize local resources for the development process better than top-down approaches. This happens because local actors have a better knowledge of local problems that need to be addressed and the resource opportunities available as well as a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the projects, which allows them to make the best of the local assets. The community-led approach can only be effective if it develops

trust among stakeholders and is supported by perennial structures with the necessary experience and expertise.

The bottom-up approach should not be regarded as competing with or opposed to top-down approaches from national and/or regional authorities, but instead as a tool combining and interacting with them, in order to achieve better overall results.

CLLD can mobilize and involve local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, fostering territorial cohesion and reaching specific policy objectives.

Always laid down in the Common Guidance that is the official document for the realisation of CLLD, pointing to the main advantages of the bottom-up approach for the territory they said:

- Local actors have a better knowledge of local challenges that need to be addressed and the resource and opportunities available.
- Therefore they are able to mobilise local resources for the development process in a way that does not happen with top-down approaches.
- This gives local actors a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the projects, which allows them to make the best of the local assets.
- However, the community-led approach can only be effective if it develops trust among stakeholders and is supported by enduring local structures with the necessary experience and expertise.

Said what above, the real nature and the deep sense of CLLD, the cornerstone of this important feature of the next European programming period is the LEADER method, the specific program for Rural Development Fund. LEADER is the heart of CLLD and it's deeply evident if we consider the interconnection between the place-based development and partnership which are the essential elements of the CLLD itself.

Then, considering the aims of Europe 2020's strategy within the next programming period we are in front of a challenge that is twofold and we can run the risk to claim that it could be embedded into the spirit and the achievement itself of CLLD. On the one hand, there is the challenge of citizen involvement. Participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizen participation than traditional representative democracy and strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision-making. On the other hand, the territorial cohesion (one of the pillars of the Common Strategic Framework that will lead all the Structural Funds) will be ensured focusing on place-based approaches as a method to elaborate the more efficient local development strategies starting up from the local needs.

Following up with this second level because of its connection with the bottom-up approach by the European perspective as we have seen above we would like to retrace the scientific framework on the rural development. Not only for a matter of type of development but also because we think that the level and intensity of participation is inevitably linked and circumscribed to the local dimension of reference.

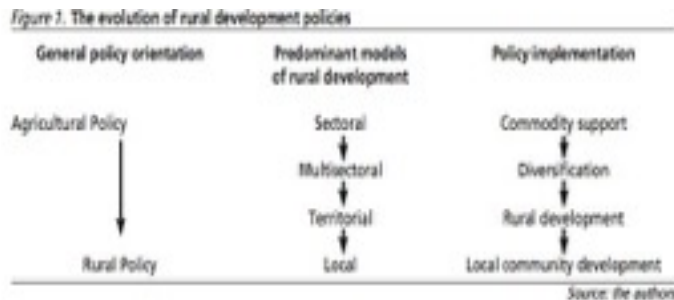
Community and integrated rural development

Considering the territorial cohesion like a challenge and a goal of the next programming period, the research is focusing on the rural dimension given that in such field several are the place-based policies achieved.

Rural development is a dynamic process of change which aims at improving the well-being and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas through collective process: the main goal is to improve the quality of life of rural people in reference to their economic, social and cultural conditions of communities. Rural development is something more than the classic way of production, it provides a different approach and outcomes respect from the agricultural sector strategies.

To better understand the difference between the old concept and the new approach to the policies for rural development it's useful to remind the models elaborated by Midmore and Hodge (2008) about the downshifting evolution of rural development orientation. They indicate four models of rural development policies: the first one is the agricultural policy, an immediate post-war model, that is centred on the agricultural sector with the priority of increasing food production and of enhancing rural employment and services. Through time the sectoral approach has left the field to the multisectoral policy that sees agriculture as one of several economic sectors through which the development objectives can be attained. The focus may

still be on farming, but there is encouragement for agricultural diversification. Then Midmore and Hodge indicate the territorial approach recognising the wider interactions within the rural economy and the importance of social and environmental as well as economic issues. The following step is the local model as an answer to the requirement of the resources to be directed towards particular problems at the individual household or business level. This is clearly an impossible task for a central or federal government and indicates the requirement for decentralisation of decision-making. But it may still not be feasible for a regional government and may demand an even more localised approach. Below a smart scheme of the four models:



Considering the issues of the research project we have to focus on the territorial and local models given that the move towards a territorial, and especially to a local approach, involves a much greater degree of choice and discretion in the ways in which public resources might be applied. This complexity makes far greater demands on information and local institutional developments are required in order to handle it.

Regarding to our research we would like to assume that our perspective represents the shift from the territorial approach to the local one and so the shift from the rural development to the community-based development.

Therefore, investigating on rural development with the lens of citizen participation leads us to end up dealing with a specific and innovative declination of it, analysed at academic level as well as political one: this is the integrated rural development understood as the process of combining multiple development services into a coherent delivery system with the aim of improving the well-being of rural populations through the economic diversification. For this reason according to Shucksmith (2010) integrated rural development is called into question by a wide-spread recognition of a shift from government towards governance that 'refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred' (Stoker 1996).

More and more in the last 30 years, the rural development concept takes the connotes of Integrated Rural Development understood as the process of combining multiple development services into a coherent delivery system with the aim of improving the well-being of rural populations through the economic diversification. Indeed the term integrated rural development (IRD) was originated in developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s (Morris 1981) and was introduced in Europe during the 1980s. Thus, it was in 1982 that the EU launched its integrated development programme as an answer towards to the increasing interest at the European level to develop a new model of rural development support as agricultural surpluses and growing environmental concerns challenged the identity of the rural with the agricultural (Shucksmith, 2009).

There are two central components of IRD – multi-sectoral planning and local level coordination; and two spin-offs – area concentration and decentralisation (ODI, 1979). Given these elements, we can say that, taking the scheme of Midmore and Hodge, IRD is classifiable in the margin of territorial and local models.

More specifically, there is general agreement that IRD projects have the following characteristics. They are:

1. focused on particular geographic areas;
2. designed and implemented by outside groups, e.g., national development agencies and/or international donors;
3. mainly concerned with the coordination of public goods and services;
4. multi-sectoral, though emphasizing agricultural production.

Such approach tends to emphasize the identification and mobilization of endogenous potential, that is, the ability of places to grow drawing on their own resources. The new approach though is applied not just in

areas with obvious economic strengths such as major cities – but in all areas. The new “place-based” approaches involve attempts to tap into economic potential that remains unused and not identifiable to outside agencies, so that participation by actors from the local public, private and voluntary sector in the design and carrying-out of development is also at the heart of the endogenous hypothesis (Ray, 1999).

And in fact, accordingly, the emphasis within European rural development has shifted since the early 1990s to a ‘new rural development paradigm’ focused on ‘neo-endogenous development’ (Ray, 2006; van der Ploeg et al., 2000; Woods, 2011). Rather than relying on external investment to stimulate economic development, this approach looks inwards to mobilize local actors and valorize local resources, but equally seeks to engage customers and markets outside the region. It is in part based on the perception that the structural disadvantages of geography that had held back rural localities in the past have been eroded by globalization, and that rural localities are therefore able to mobilize themselves to carve out distinctive niches in the global economy (Halseth et al., 2010).

This kind of approach to the rural development policy has been faced even at political level: in line with the Declaration of Cork (1996) asserting that rural policy must be as decentralised as possible and based on partnership and co-operation between all levels concerned, the Organisation for economic co-operation and development – OECD (2006) calls this innovative approach a “New Paradigm” of the regional development; with this new approach it emphasizes bottom-up, locally designed and owned strategies aimed at promoting growth potential in all local economies in a perspective of multi-level governance with a stronger role of local and regional actors.

Two principles characterize the “new rural paradigm”:

- 1) a focus on *places* instead of sectors, with a particular perspective towards the local potentials
- 2) a focus on *investments* instead of subsidies.

The “new rural paradigm” requires important changes in how policies are conceived and implemented to include a cross-cutting and multi-level governance approach. Designing rural development policy for different communities or territories requires the pooling of knowledge held by a wide variety of public and private actors. Traditional hierarchical administrative structures are likely to be inadequate to administer these policies effectively and adjustments are thus needed along three key governance dimensions: horizontally at both the central and the local levels and vertically across levels of government.

In this way we reach different goals:

1. the place-based approach at the local level has helped foster public-private partnerships and integrate new stakeholders and resources into the development process.
2. these initiatives are developing a culture of cross-sectoral cooperation within central and local governments and thus more coherent policy initiatives.
3. there is recognition that a place-based approach requires more bottom-up as opposed to top-down initiatives. This produces new ways of coordinating vertically across levels of government and a better use of local knowledge.

Then, if we would like to focus on the application of the scientific theory to the practice, the IRD approach in EU policy, for many, is exemplified by the LEADER Community Initiative. The EU’s declared objective for LEADER was for local actors to work together to find innovative solutions to rural problems which could reflect what is best suited to their areas and could also serve as models for developing rural areas elsewhere. Ray (2000) identifies three aspects to this approach: a territorial basis (as opposed to a sectoral one); the use of local resources; and local contextualisation through active public participation. The approach held out the prospect of ‘local areas assuming greater control of development by reorienting development around local resources and by setting up structures to sustain the local development momentum after the initial “official” intervention’ (Ray 2000 p. 166). In the LEADER model, then, IRD is not only a territorial alternative to sectoral policies, but is also seen as promoting endogenous development as a means of building the capacity of people in rural localities to resist broader forces of global competition, fiscal crises or social exclusion (Kearney et al. 1994; Ray 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Shucksmith 2000).

In this way, as highlighted by Ray (1999), throughout the European Union, policy makers at the state and supra-state levels are increasingly incorporating the terms ‘bottom-up,’ ‘participative’ and ‘local’ in order to signal new styles of intervention in their search for answers to the problems of rural society. Since 1988, the EU has been experimenting with the approach through, for example, its Objective 5b programmes and the LEADER Initiative but, as a political doctrine, it has also surfaced in, for example, the delivery of state functions through ‘community’ bodies (Rose, 1996). Central to both approaches to endogenous development is the ‘bottom-up’ as a different approach respect from ‘top-down’ strong of the idea that development will be more successful and sustainable if it starts from a base of local resources and involves popular

participation in the design and implementation of development action.

The LEADER experience abounds with examples of 'new' bodies taking on the role of animating endogenous development, often deliberately based on geographical boundaries that transcend those of the public authorities. Furthermore, and to varying degrees, the responsibility for designing and implementing LEADER in localities has been mediated through the participation of players outwith the model of representative democracy: private sector bodies, 'community' groups and various non-governmental organizations (particularly representing cultural and environmental interests) (Ray, 1998)

LEADER method and community

Considering that in the two previous paragraphs, analysing the term of CLLD and rural development, we found out the concept of LEADER as an essential component of those, at this point of the research we have to investigate about what LEADER is and how it works on the territory.

LEADER is a local development method which allows local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential. Leader ('Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale', meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions') is a local development method which allows local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential. Europe has launched LEADER since 1991 and since its first launch, LEADER has provided rural communities in the EU with the tools to play an active role in shaping their own future.

This initiative, originally launched by the European Commission in 1991 for a three-years period and then succeeded by a second, much enlarged, five-years phase in 1995, has generated much interest in the rural development circles (Ray, 1999). Briefly, the rationale of LEADER was to use a very minor portion of the EU budget to animate socio-economic development in nominated rural territories throughout the EU. The unit of intervention was local territories ("vertical" measures in EU language) rather than the more traditional, economic sectors (the "horizontal" approach). Organisations/committees representative of the local public, private and voluntary sectors were to be in charge of designing and then implementing a development plan for their territory using the endogenous principles mentioned above. The rhetoric portrayed the initiative as a rural laboratory in which innovative ideas for rural development would be explored, local people would be encouraged to rediscover and valorise their local identity and the social, cultural and environmental dimensions would be recognised as vital ingredients in a sustainable, endogenous, territorial, development dynamic.

The LEADER approach is based on three interrelated elements – sometimes referred to as “the holy trinity of local development”: the strategy, the area and the partnership. The specific features of the LEADER model come from applying 7 principles:

- (1) Area based local development strategies for sub regional territories;
- (2) Local private-public partnerships (LAGs);
- (3) Bottom-up approach with decision making power to LAGs;
- (4) Multi-sectoral (integrated) design and implementation of strategy;
- (5) Innovation;
- (6) Cooperation;
- (7) Networking of local partnerships.

The bottom-up approach means that local actors participate in decision-making about the strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local area. Experience has shown that the bottom-up approach should not be considered as alternative or opposed to top-down approaches from national and/or regional authorities, but rather as combining and interacting with them, in order to achieve better overall results.

The importance of the LEADER method in the context of a local development strategy has been recognized all over Europe, and there are plenty of examples under the LEADER approach that show how local development strategies can be developed with LEADER funding and how they may continue to have a positive impact into the next programming period. For these reasons, from the current European programming, LEADER has become an integral part of rural development policy.

The involvement of local actors includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups and representative public and private institutions. Capacity building is an essential component of the bottom-up approach, involving: awareness raising, training, participation and mobilization of the local population to identify the strengths and weakness of the area (analysis); participation of different interest groups in drawing up a local development strategy; establishment of clear criteria for selection at local level of appropriate actions (projects) to deliver the strategy. Participation should not be limited to the initial phase but should extend throughout the implementation process, contributing to the strategy, the accomplishment of the selected projects and in stocktaking and learning for the future. There are also important issues of transparency which need to be addressed in the mobilization and consultation procedures in order to reach consensus through dialogue and negotiation among participating actors.

The juridical tool through which LEADER takes place is the Local Action Group (LAG), which is composed of local partnership. The LAG has the task of identifying and implementing a local development strategy, making decisions about the allocation of its financial resources and managing them. LAGs are likely to be effective in stimulating sustainable development because they:

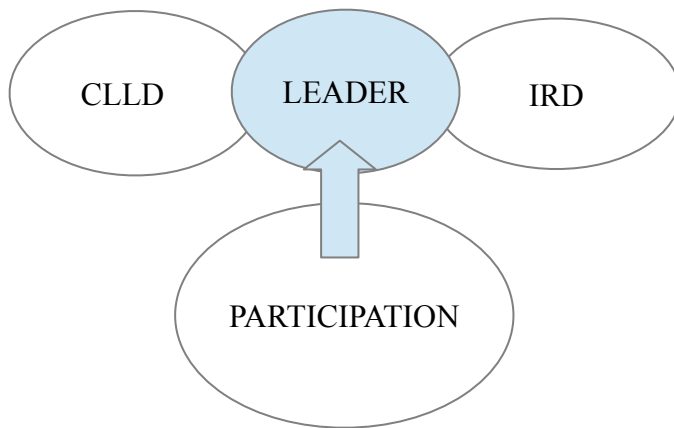
- Aggregate and combine available human and financial resources from the public sector, the private sector, the civic and voluntary sectors;
- Associate local players around collective projects and multi-sectorial actions, in order to achieve synergies, joint ownership, and the critical mass needed to improve the area's economic competitiveness;
- Strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between different rural actors, who often have little experience in working together, by reducing potential conflict and facilitating negotiated solutions through consultation and discussion;
- Facilitate, through the interaction between different partners, the processes of adaptation and change in the agricultural sector (for example, quality products, and food chains), the integration of environmental concerns, the diversification of the rural economy and quality of life.

A LAG should associate public and private partners, and be well-balanced and representative of the existing local interest groups, drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the area. At the decision-making level, the private partners and associations must make up at least 50% of the local partnership.

As stressed by Ray (1999b), interventions such as LEADER represent, even in local terms, rather minor commitments of public money (when compared with the total flows into the rural economy) and therefore could be cast as an experiment in the rejuvenation of democratic participation. The primary function of participative development initiatives, while pursuing improvements in local socio-economic well-being, may therefore also be to assist in the animation of citizenship involvement. Participative evaluation is thus transformed from the evaluation of results into a contribution to the maintenance and reinforcement of the dynamic; more an animator of participative democracy rather than of concrete (rural) development; more a tool of consciousness-raising than of assessment.

It's clear enough that the optimal dimension to apply LEADER is the local dimension and its relations between local forces and extra-local ones. Recognizing defined boundaries and feeling to belong to them at local level could establish an identity based on ethnic roots.

At this point of the research we have analysed the political context, focusing on two particular aspects by the European perspective: the CLLD and the integrated rural development. We saw in both cases the term LEADER is the cornerstone for each achievement together with the importance of the improvement of local participation. If we would like to imagine a kind of graphic to illustrate the research structure we could hypothesize something like this:



The answer becomes: Could LEADER approach being considered a reading key and a cornerstone of the citizen participation, also at the level of governance system?

Community and participation

We said that one of the aims of the next European programming period is the participation of citizenship to be empowered and we can't not associate it to the term of democracy and particularly within its declination of participatory and deliberative. Before speaking about the scientific theories about it, we have to point out that participation regards citizens and so constituencies are defined by territory, in such a way that individuals are represented insofar as they are inhabitants of a territory (Rehfeld 2005). Beginning with the formation of the modern state system, territorial residence became the fundamental condition for political inclusion or citizenship (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). In the specific of our research, the reference territory, on which focusing through participation's lens, is the rural area. Afterwards, we can go head dealing with the features of democratic participation and its application.

Without rebuilding here the entire process that led to the definition of the term "democracy" and starting from Aristotele passing through Rousseau, merely for reasons of space, it is important to focus on the relationship that has developed between democracy and the role of citizens in the context of systems of representative democracy such as those that exist in modern States. In this perspective, more so in the context of the crisis of modernity, we have developed two forms of democracy, the participatory democracy and the deliberative one as well as a tool of democratization of democracy in a context where the disconnection from the institutional level with the consequent distrust is particularly vivid.

If the idea that gets common participatory democracy and deliberative democracy is a new way of thinking and achieving citizen participation in democratic life through forms of active involvement in issues of public importance with the creation of an optimal size, it is equally true that, even if they are linked to each other, the two forms of democracy are distinct enough. It is clear that deliberative democracy and participatory democracy have different origins, the first one was born in the second half of the twentieth century in the Anglo-American environment, the second one develops at the end of the same century in the Latin American context; then that the first one has got a more legislative and philosophical nature than the second one, which is characterized by a most applicative orientation, the process of policy-making participatory approach is a kind of fluctuations from the participative democracy toward its higher pole higher of the deliberation as at the level of the deliberative democracy. On the relation between participatory democracy and deliberative democracy Bifulco (2009) performs some interesting observations : "[...] it can be said that the forms of participatory democracy give expression to the theories of deliberative democracy, as they satisfy the two requirements of effective participation of all interested parties and the nature of deliberative participation. The concrete experiences of participatory democracy show techniques that are obviously designed to satisfy this purpose, specifically, with reference to the requirement of effective participation of all concerned. Referring to the requirement of deliberative decision-making, we think of the role of external parties with respect to the decision to be taken: leaders, leaders and experts, in some cases, even independent authorities. It seems to me that, because of the way they are organized, the concrete forms of participatory democracy confirm to be applications of the theories of deliberative democracy".

Dealing with the ideals of citizen participation rather than the instruments of participation, Habermas (1999) states whether Democratic participation generated a new level of legally mediated solidarity via the status of citizenship (Habermas, 1999) and consequently participative democracy is considered a dynamic and open-ended project based on a “game” of active confrontation between civil society and institutions (Allegretti 2010).

Even according to Moro (2009) the participatory democracy has more to do with the phase of policy formation including the agenda, the planning and the decision; encompassing within its scope the phases of implementation and control runs the risk of an overlap with a phenomenon, in many respects different from the participatory democracy, which is what civic activism. On the other hand, placing participatory practices almost exclusively in the early stages of policy-making, you run the risk of further reducing them to mere consultation exercises, which, however, may not have any influence on the decisions taken by public entities. Essential point of each participatory practice that, in its essence, is regarded as such relates to the influence of participation in the political and administrative decisions.

Regarding the next level of participation, that one including the deliberation and so the deliberative democracy if we would like to adopt the above distinction, Steiner (2012) resumes the definition given by Mansbridge about the essence of deliberative model: “we conclude by pointing out that 'deliberation' is not just any talk. In the ideal, democratic deliberation eschew coercive power in the process of coming to decision. Its central task is mutual justification. Ideally, participants in deliberation are engaged, with mutual respect, as free and equal citizens in a search for fair terms of cooperation”. This definition is getting closer to the Latin “deliberare” that means to weigh, to ponder, to consider, to reflect. Going ahead with Mansbridge, a deliberative system is a system that involves a “talk- based approach to political conflict and problem-solving skills ” through various forms of communication, “Arguing, talking, demonstrating, expressing and persuading”. He carries on defining three features of the deliberative system: the first function is epistemic: the deliberation produces ‘preferences’, opinions and decisions that are appropriately informed by facts and logic and that are the outcomes of substantive and meaningful consideration of relevant reasons. The second function is ethical: to promote mutual respect among citizens to deliberate with each other because one has to understand the other as an autonomous source (self- authoring) of reasons and needs. The third function is not separable from the other two, is that democratic one, promoting an inclusive political process in terms of equality “The inclusion of multiple and plural voices, interests, concerns and claims on the basis of feasible equality is not simply an ethic added to democratic deliberation; it is the central element of what makes deliberative democratic process process democratic”.

It's stated that participation, in both democratic orientations, is strongly needed to face the sense of fragmentation and individualisation of the post-modern and globalised society: in this way the participation plays an essential role to increase the democratic quality of inter-demoi interaction especially due to the emergence of a pluricentric political system in which cross demoi decision making is more the rule than the exception. Consequently, there is an urgent call for new theories of democracy which are able to identify standards for institutional setups that facilitate inter-demoi participation and deliberation (Sorensen, 2004a).

If we move the glance to the potential connection between citizen participation and community-based, in the perspective of the achievement of the CLLD of our research, we can get very useful the reference to the development theories of democracy that perceive political and participation and deliberation as crucial for the transformation of the citizens from self-interested individuals into democratic citizens who regard themselves as part of a united People with common interests and a shared understanding and identity (Stuart Mill, 1861/1946; Tocqueville, 1835/1968; Almond & Verba, 1963; Pateman, 1970). Democratic citizens do not merely pursue individual goals but seek to promote the common good of the specific demos to which they belong. The sense of communality and shared identity that constitutes a strong unitary demos is brought about through the existence of a well functioning civil society that allows for extensive citizen participation and public deliberation. Citizen participation helps to visualize the interrelatedness between individual and collective interests while ongoing deliberation among the citizens enhances the creation of shared understanding and belonging as such a strong civil society is seen as the corner stone of democracy (Sorensen, 2008a).

An intense discussion about the importance of participation and citizen involvement is not only at the scientific level, but even at the European policy level the referenced main goal is to open up policy-making to make it more inclusive and accountable. A better use of powers should connect the EU more closely to its citizens and lead to more effective policies. According to the *White Paper of the European Commission* published in 2001, we have to purpose five principles: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. The big idea is to expand democratic participation: this goal of greater participation goes alongside a broad shift in the nature and role of governing institutions from command and control in hierarchies to facilitation and negotiation in networks.

“The [European] Union must renew the Community method by following a less top-down approach”. That is to say, “the linear model of dispensing policies from above must be replaced by a virtuous circle, based on feedback, networks and involvement from policy creation to implementation at all levels” (White Paper of the European Commission, 2001)

Finally, it is worth mentioning the Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance, signed in 2005 at the Sixth Global Forum on "Reinventing the Govern18" organized by the Government of the Republic of Korea in collaboration with the United Nations, which was attended by representatives the governments of several European countries and not, international organizations, civil society and academia . The document defines major principles of participatory democracy. It is stated in paragraph 21: "Governments should recognize and involve civil society as partners in decision-making and implementation of public policies. We agree that building constructive partnerships between states, businesses and civil society is essential to achieve sustainable economic development. This requires that all the parties involved are willing to accept and promote the diversity between genders, races, ethnicities, classes , religions, beliefs, cultures and regions. " In paragraph 24 we read instead: "Civil society should try and develop new forms of civic engagement and involvement at the global level, with the goal of making the decisions of intergovernmental organizations more transparent and democratic. It's important to realize that civil society within each country will be more effective by sharing experiences and connecting with civil society organizations in other countries while accepting the diversity between partners around the world."

Given above mentioned references, we could try to answer to the previous question and so: is it possible considering LEADER method as a tool of governance system whereby the participation becomes the essential component to achieve a community-based development and a communality identity? Could LEADER method be considered a kind of funnel inside which participation and territorial cohesion in rural areas might find their realisation?

If we look at the combination of participation and endogenous development into the LEADER method we can assume whether it might be an alternative of orthodox representative democracy considering the composition of the LAG: this is also because of the appearance of ‘non-elected’ interests into the decision-making structure through the voice of the private sector, interest groups and the civil society. At the same time probably we should mainly focus on the features of the deliberative democracy, not only on the participatory one, saw that the spirit of the citizen involvement as formulated for the LEADER method is primarily addressed to get decisions in the policy-making process applied to the territorial dimension.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Taking into account this framework, the research is focusing on the LEADER method as a connector between participation and integrated rural development in a perspective of local community and of building of CLLD during the period 2014-2020.

By a empirical point of view in order to verify the hypothesis, we have to select some LAGs as the field of the comparison of the data through a tool of comparison: we have decided to adopt the measure 321 of the European programming period 2007-2013 considering its relevance for the quality life of rural people and its interesting connection with the local policy formulated by Midmore and Hodge.

The research is trying to get the answers to the following questions:

How might LEADER method be understood as a tool of participative democracy in the system of neo-endogenous rural development?

How might LEADER improve the building of the CLLD which will be composed by LAGs?

How might LEADER and CLLD be a system of governance for the local dimension and development?

The analysis of the current period should give an essential contribution to improve the participation in the CLLD for the next years with a particular attention for the involvement of the local stakeholders, understanding how they have been involved, which tools (assembly, vote, board etc.), at which levels (local and regional) have been used and what will be the innovative perspectives for the future.

Considering that the main goals of next programming period are the territorial cohesion and the citizen

participation we would like to demonstrate how at local level of bottom-up approach the citizen participation might facilitate and improve the rebuilding up of the community in the perspective of the overtaking of the crisis of democracy and of the social fragmentation due to the globalization. Regarding to it, we wonder how the CLLD, as formulated by the European Union for the period 2014-2020, might be considered a new governance system for the local development.

And so, given the main goals of the next European programming period 2014-2020, regarding the introduction of the CLLD and considering that the cornerstone of CLLD is LEADER approach as applied in the rural development program, the research is trying to get the answers to the following questions:

How might LEADER method be understood as a tool of participative democracy in the system of neo-endogenous rural development?

How might the citizen participation at local level of bottom-up approach contribute to the rebuilding up of the re-embedded community in the perspective of the overtaking of the crisis of democracy and of the social fragmentation due to the globalization?

How might CLLD be considered as a system of governance for the local dimension and development thanks to the citizen participation and inclusion?

METHODS

The research is developed among two levels: the theoretical knowledge about the scientific and political context I would like to focus on and the practical knowledge through empirical data and fieldwork.

Empirically, the research is based on a comparative case studies, in three distinct areas: Tuscany for Italy, Flanders for Belgium and Tampere for Finland. The choice of these three regions has got the aim to compare different areas in Europe, in the political and administrative perspective, in order to show up if and how the governance system might strengthen or weaken the more efficient application of the programme.

The field of comparison is the activation of the measure 321 during the current programming period 2007-2013. Measure 321 aims at improving and maintaining the living conditions and welfare of those living in rural areas and at increasing the attractiveness of such areas through the provision of more and better basic services. Exactly for this reason I've decided to adopt such measure because I guess it's the more significant for the building of the local community.

Although Measure 321 is a generic measure, these regions are subject to different governance systems, and embedded in different social and cultural contexts. These region-specific contexts will allow us to investigate if and how the Local Action Groups (LAGs) function as a tool of participatory democracy and place-based development in the perspective of the idea of CLLD.

For that reason we have to contextualise each case study by institutional and political perspective. Afterwards, we have to focus on the structure of the LAG, the nature of the society, the modality of the partnership (composition, internal balance etc.), the setting of the deliberations and the political legitimacy, the defining of the agenda and the representing rules.

For each region I've taken a single LAG, chosen according to the relevance given to the measure 321 as demonstrated by the numbers and the quality of the activated projects, and the set data cases will be used are: materials produced, mail, meeting reports, interviews, calls.

The case of Tuscany

For Tuscany the case study is the LAG FAR Maremma, in the South of the Region, considering that, according to the Regional Programme 2007-2013, such LAG has adopted as the main thematism for the Local Development Strategies the "Improvement of the quality life in the rural areas" focusing on the Measure 321. A first result of mutual connection between rural development and participatory democracy has been realised just for the individuation of the thematism, basic choice in order to set up the local development strategies plan 2007-2013.

The Rural Development Programme in Tuscany has been activated a bit later respect to the European

programming, in deed in 2009, because of the delay of the Region during its preparation and approval.

According to the Regional Programme each LAG had to adopt a main thematism within which flowed certain measures of Axis 4 LEADER depending on the field of action. The thematisms set up by the Managing Authority were 4: Theme A “Support to the defense, valorisation and riqualfication of the rural heritage of the territory (cultural, natural and of small towns)” ; Theme B “Support and promotion of the competitiveness of the local quality products even through the new knowledge and new technologies” ; Theme C “Diversification of the economic rural environment” ; Theme D “Improvement of the quality life in the rural areas”.

A first result of mutual connection between rural development and participatory democracy has been realised just for the individuation of the thematism, basic choose in order to set up the local development strategies plan 2007-2013.

In June 2008 the LAG experienced the *Programme of territorial partecipative animation “Tools and methodologies of local development. The liaisons and the networks”* in order to promote the discussion about the thematisms and the measures of the rural development European programming with the perspective of citizen and local stakeholders' participation

LAG FAR Maremma organised 6 meetings located among the entire territory to give people a better opportunity to attend. Together with these meetings there were also institutional meetings with the Province, the Municipalities, the Mountain Communities etc.

The local actors were informed about the participative meeting by an invitation mail with attached the brochure and the schedule of meetings. Then the initiative was published on the LAG's website, the production of brochure promoted at institutional and private levels.

There was also a national expert of Agenda 21 together with whom the staff could define and improve the methodology that he exposed to the participants. Afterwords, in every meeting the participants were divided into 4 groups according to the thematisms under the guidance of a facilitator chosen among the staff. In each group the facilitator illustrated even though given materials the measures of the thematism highlighting the beneficiaries, the actions, the percentage of financing, the eligible expenses. The word is then passed to each participant invited by the facilitator to discuss and to write down in a note the strong points and the weak points of the measures. The notes were attached on a blackboard in order to stress those points and the priority recognised by the local actors for each measure. Then it was arranged the crossed discussed among the thematisms.

Each meeting was registered in order to produce pictures and videos for demonstration purposes.

The crossed comparison of the priorities emerged during the forum and the participative working groups led towards the choice of the thematism D.

RESULTS

The involvement of citizenship and local stakeholders through the participative animation, as experienced for the first time as a tool of bottom-up approach in order to define the local development strategies, was recognised by the participants as a way not only to be involved in the policy-decision (especially if you consider the impact of the seven years programming period) but also to discuss and deepen the issues.

CONCLUSION

At this level we are speaking about a participation between public and private sectors. The regional level had set up the thematisms and we couldn't talk about a concrete participation of the LAG level.

Through the methodology of "animation participated" LAG told in the Report to the Managing Authority that it has not operated as a mere carrier of information to potential stakeholders but as a promoter of a new method of information shared and disseminated.

In this way LAG tried to create a relationship of close integration and interaction between the LAG - responsible for the management of the Axis IV Method "Leaders" of the RDP -, citizens and stakeholders to issues of rural development.

At this stage of animation were favored some representative subjects and subjects with common interests such as local authorities, associations, consortia of entrepreneurs. In this way it was possible to involve a wide panorama of subjects, expression of the local economic and social fabric, potentially interested in the preparation and knowledge of the SISL.

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